

Strategy #: 18**Strategy Name: Community-based Early Literacy Programs**

Strategy Description: Create more opportunities for early literacy programs that will provide an opportunity for parents to interact with their children in the company of other families. This may include a government to government agreement with either Navajo County, or Apache County.

Research shows that the first three years of life are a period of incredible growth in all areas of a baby's development. A newborn's brain is about 25 percent of its approximate adult weight. By age three, it has grown dramatically by producing billions of cells and hundreds of trillions of connections, or synapses, between these cells. While we know the development of a young child's brain takes years to complete, we also know there are many things parents and caregivers can do to assist children to get off to a good start and establish healthy patterns for life-long learning. Data on parental reading for children between zero through five years, drawn from the National Survey of Children's Health (2003) indicates that in the State of Arizona, only 43.2 percent of children in this age range are read to daily, placing Arizona near the bottom of the ranking at 44th. Only 40.6 percent of children ages zero through three years are read to daily, placing Arizona at the flat bottom of the ranking at 51st.

The unemployment rate for the Navajo/Apache Region is currently close to 13 percent¹; 42 percent of Arizona's families are living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)². Additionally, many parents are faced with significantly reduced work hours and are now providing primary care for their children. One of the outcomes of poverty can be social isolation, which can also place a child at risk for language delay. Early language skills, the foundation for later reading ability, are based primarily on language exposure and human interaction (parents and other adults talking to young children). The more words parents use when speaking to an infant, the greater the size of the child's vocabulary at age three. Parents reading frequently to their children provide language and literacy skills that help children learn to read. Helping children prepare for the challenge of learning to read before school entry is better than helping them catch up later. Reading aloud is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading. Many children from low-income families hear fewer words and learn fewer words and their limited vocabularies essentially leave them language delayed at school entry, which places them at educational risk. Of all parent-child activities, reading aloud provides the richest exposure to language, so promotion of reading aloud, especially for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds, holds great promise for strengthening school readiness and laying a strong foundation for future educational success.³

The Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council would like to explore a partnership with the Apache and Navajo County Libraries to expand the number and variety of early literacy programs offered through the libraries. Utilizing the existing network of county libraries will provide easy access for families to take advantage of early literacy programs and will work to support a family's use of those libraries. In a related strategy, the Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council is also proposing to work with the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension to provide a series of community-based trainings related to nutrition and nutrition education utilizing the Eating Right is Basic Curriculum. The Eating Right is Basic curriculum

¹ Arizona Department of Revenue, Workforce Indicators (March 2009)

² US Census, Summary File 3 (SF3); QT-P32 (2000)

³ Russ S, Perez V, Garro N, Klass P, Kuo AA, Gershun M, Halfon N, Zuckerman B. Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook (2007): Reach Out and Read National Center, Boston, MA.

provides a natural connection to our regional libraries, especially because it aims to create behavior change in families by giving them access to tools and information. Libraries represent an excellent venue to hold the Eating Right is Basic series of trainings, especially because the target population of each strategy is the same. These two strategies could form the framework for a much strengthened relationship between the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension, the Apache and Navajo County WIC programs, and the library district in each county.

Effective literacy development programs, whether provided in a home or community setting, understand the parent's literacy history and strengths and reinforce their knowledge and skills as well as provide an opportunity for adults and children to reflect on literacy practices in their daily lives. Programs should also consider the family's socio-cultural context including how children's experiences with the world greatly influence their ability to comprehend what they read. It is important that programs provide accommodations and adaptations for children and adults with special needs or disabilities and recognize oral language as the foundation for literacy development. Programs should contain an educational component which formally or informally affects the child's literacy or development.

Early literacy programs that are supported by this strategy will meet the First Things First Standards of Practice for Community-Based Early Literacy Programs and will utilize a research-based and proven curriculum. All funded programs will clearly be offered in addition to the existing early literacy programs currently offered by each library (story times, family literacy programs, etc.) and the funded agency will outline how the proposed program will augment the services already offered for families.

The Navajo/Apache region is very wide-spread, with small community libraries scattered across the region. Several families with young children live in small communities that are not close to libraries that currently offer early literacy programs, and the current economic environment makes travel to a library in Show Low, Snowflake or Pinetop not feasible. The outlying community libraries are on average 30-40 miles away from each other. The Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council would like to support the provision of early literacy programs at these smaller community libraries so that families and children living outside of the primary residential hubs in the region can have easier access to these types of programs. To make this possible, a significant amount of travel will be required in order to travel to the outlying community libraries. Additionally, the current library staff is not sufficient to conduct any additional early literacy programming; therefore staff will need to be hired to facilitate these sessions. In both county's library systems, there is a need for new materials to be purchased to support early literacy programming, and the Council would like to support this need as well.

Lead Goal: Family Support

Goals:

- FTF will coordinate and integrate with existing education and information systems to expand families' access to high-quality, diverse and relevant information and resources to support their child's optimal development.
- FTF will increase the availability, quality and diversity of relevant resources that support language and literacy development for young children and their families.

Key Measures:

- Percentage of families of children zero through age five who report they maintain language- and literacy-rich home environments (e.g. children hear language throughout the day, children have opportunities for listening and talking with family members, books and other literacy tools and materials are available and accessible to children)
- Percentage of families with children zero through age five who report reading to their children

daily in their primary language			
Target Population: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Families and extended family networks in our region with children ages zero through fiveRural or isolated communities where children have limited access to literacy resources			
Proposed Service Numbers	SFY 2011 July 1, 2010 –June 30, 2011	SFY 2012 July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012	SFY 2013 July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013
	100 families	110 families	121 families
Performance Measures: 1) Number of families reporting an increase in the number of days the family reads/Proposed service numbers via pre-/post-test 2) Number of families attending family literacy programs/Proposed service numbers			
SFY 2011 Expenditure Plan for Proposed Strategy			
Allocation for proposed strategy	\$50,000		
Budget Justification: \$40,000 Personnel \$ 5,000 Travel within the region (Based on average of 200 miles per week at the State of Arizona rate of 44.5 cents per mile) \$ 5,000 Materials \$50,000 Total funds for FY 2011 Flexibility is expected in the actual line-item budget that gets submitted by the eventual grantee ; the above is only an estimation of costs. Total funding for the FY remains at \$50,000.			